

# **STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON WINTER 1994-95**

**ANNUAL HOMELESS CENSUS REPORT  
DECEMBER 27, 1994**

**THOMAS M. MENINO, MAYOR**



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CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
THOMAS M. MENINO

**STATE OF HOMELESSNESS IN BOSTON  
STATEMENT OF MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO  
DECEMBER 27, 1994**

On the night of December 12th, 150 volunteers joined with the City of Boston to conduct the homeless census. We found less people on the streets that night, but we found more people staying in shelters.

There was a ten percent increase in the amount of homeless men, women, and children in Boston. This year, there were 5,299 homeless people compared to 4,809 homeless people last year.

The information we obtained from the census will help us plan for the winter months. In Boston, we have done a remarkable job of providing for the emergency shelter needs of homeless individuals and families. We have done that by coordinating the information we obtained from the census each winter with the State and homeless providers.

Today, I am here not to justify the problems of homelessness in Boston, but to begin a new partnership with shelter providers, homeless advocates, and the business community to find solutions to the problems of homelessness. With me are the members of the homeless planning committee for the City of Boston. The men and women who will be serving on this committee will help the City prioritize it's use of McKinney homeless assistance funds. The Clinton administration intends to block grant McKinney funds to cities. Boston's share will be \$11.9 million.

The City of Boston and providers of homeless services have worked hard to move homeless individuals and families beyond shelters and into appropriate transitional and permanent housing. However, we have been hampered by a lack of funding sufficient to "jump-start" a more comprehensive effort, while at the same time ensuring that the emergency needs of the homeless continue to be met. Without new commitments of Federal and State funding to support a new approach, it will be extremely difficult for all of the new components of the continuum of care to be implemented effectively.

A commitment of additional HUD funding, leveraged with an equivalent commitment of City, State, and private funding, will capitalize the implementation of a new, comprehensive approach to homelessness in the City of Boston. We are capable of acting immediately because of the City's long-standing financial and policy commitment to address the needs of the homeless.

Even though the City has already begun to respond to implementing a new approach to homelessness, the next steps will be difficult. There is no system designed to address homelessness that can erase poverty and other social conditions that allow homelessness to exist.

However, we cannot allow our current economic problems, the shortage of affordable housing, or the problems in our social welfare and services systems, to deter us from moving forward with a more effective response to those homeless individuals and families who are in need of assistance.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The overall homeless population has increased by 10.2% this year. There were 2,613 men, 1,274 women, and 1,412 children in shelter this year. Last year, there were 2,427 men, 1,137 women, and 1,245 children in shelter. This year, the total census count was 5,299, compared to last year's total of 4,809.
2. Children represent the largest increase in the homeless population, with a 13.4% increase. Women increased 12% over last year, and men increased 7.7%.
3. The homeless single adult population represents 56.9% of the census count. Homeless families continue to grow at a higher rate than homeless single adults, but represent a smaller portion of the census population - 43.1%.
4. There were 106 men and 33 women on the streets of Boston on the night of the census, for a total of 139 people. Last year, there were 194 homeless men and women found on the streets. The year prior to that, 1992, there were 220 men and women on the street. There has been a significant decrease in the amount of homeless men and women found on the streets in the City of Boston over the last few years.
5. There were 1,783 men and 258 women in adult shelters on the night of the census - a total of 2,041, which is a 5.6% increase over the 1,932 in adult shelter last year. It was also a colder night this year, which helps to explain why fewer people were on the street and more were in shelter.
6. Last year, there were 38 men, 541 women, and 1,018 children staying in family shelters, scattered sites and hotel/motels, compared to 38 men, 624 women, and 1,195 children this year. This represents a 15.3% increase in the overall number of homeless families. However, there was a 61% increase in the number of families staying in hotels and motels this year.
7. We are continuing to see a decrease in the amount of homeless people accessing shelter through the mental health system. This year, there were 164 men and 90 women, a total of 254 homeless individuals, in Department of Mental Health shelters. This is decrease of 9.6% over last year, and a 50% decrease in the amount of homeless men and women in DMH shelter the year before.

# **THIS YEAR'S CENSUS METHODOLOGY**

## **THE SHELTER POPULATION**

Approximately one month prior to the actual census taking, Boston's Emergency Shelter Commission mailed an advisory to all of the city's public and private shelter providers to inform them of the study. These letters were succeeded by follow-up telephone calls. Shelter contacts are informed which day the census will be taken (a day expected to be cold enough for those homeless to seek refuge in a shelter), how the survey will be conducted, and a request for volunteers. They are asked to tabulate the population of the shelter on the night of the count. The City's Emergency Shelter Commission telephones each shelter on the day following the count, to calculate the total from the previous night.

## **THE STREET POPULATION**

The City is divided into thirty-eight separate entities for the purpose of the census. The areas are created as such so that they are small enough to be thoroughly covered by foot. Volunteers are also provided a list of locations in their area where homeless individuals are known to be. This list is assembled from a questionnaire that is distributed in advance to a variety of resources including , but not limited to, neighborhood representatives, individuals who work with the homeless, etc.. These people provide the City with crucial information which identify specific areas where homeless people have been known to frequent. These designations can be as large as the end of a subway station or as small as under a box in an alley.

The only exception to the strategy identified above is that some of the teams travel by car. These are areas of the City where there have historically been few homeless individuals identified, and where the neighborhood is too large to cover by foot. In such cases, volunteers get out of their vehicle and conduct the census by foot in areas which have a higher likelihood of homeless individuals.

All teams receive walkie-talkies to facilitate communication during the evening. This is required to guarantee the volunteers' safety. It also enables volunteers to call in for shelter pick-ups of homeless individuals unaware of transportation pick-up locations throughout the City.

## THE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are recruited from the various shelters throughout the City, the clergy, neighborhood residents, City employees, and City Year volunteers. This is an important element of the process, because people who work with this population can assist in avoiding stereotypes which are often associated with homelessness. Volunteers work about two hours in the early morning. The study is conducted at this time in order to ensure that businesses or other places of temporary refuge (like the MBTA) are closed. Also, the study is conducted early in the week, because there seems to be less foot traffic at this time.

Volunteers are always asked to wear warm clothing. This census count has been conducted annually near the second week of December, when the weather is cold enough to identify the population that is exposed to the elements and readily in need of temporary shelter. This year, as in previous year's, the temperature was around 30 degrees.

Volunteers are asked to designate people by the following identifiable factors:

1. Is the individual definitely or possibly homeless ?

People who have a place to go often appear not to. If it is unclear in specific situations, volunteers are asked to record these individuals as "possible." The city includes people listed as "possible" in the count presented in this document.

2. Is the individual in need of medical attention ?

Boston City Hospital provides service to indigent patients as a matter of course.

3. Does the individual need transportation to shelter ?

While vans comb the city at night, some individuals may be unable to find a ride or may be unaware of these services.

Volunteers are requested not to ask individuals anything other than the questions raised above. It is not the City's intent to violate anyone's right to privacy. Our expressed purpose is simply to determine the size of the homeless population in Boston. As a result, this study is conducted with complete anonymity.

## **HISTORY**

The first census of Boston's homeless population was conducted in 1983 by six volunteers working over a period of two weeks. The study was the City's first attempt to identify the size of the street problem associated with homelessness. This beginning work on counting the homeless inspired later projects which provided a clearer picture of the scope of the homeless population in the City of Boston. The study has grown to include over one hundred volunteers working with the coordinated efforts of government agencies and dozens of non-profit service organizations.

The Emergency Shelter Commission has conducted this census annually for the past eight years. Mayor Menino has directed appropriate City agencies and sought help from outside service providers to assist in this project.

## **PURPOSE**

It is the experience of many expert observers that government agencies are rarely prepared to address important service delivery matters when they are not aware of the scope of the problems they are confronting. The homeless problem is one such issue. Prior to conducting the first census count of the homeless, some estimates varied by as much as ten thousand people. With these "guesses" the City could not adequately prepare for the necessary shelter space, medical attention, food and transportation resources for the homeless population within its borders.

Under the leadership of Mayor Menino, the City of Boston continues its commitment that no individual will go without a bed in a warm place, transportation to shelter, a warm meal and quality medical care simply because they are poor. The annual homeless census informs the Mayor as to what resources he will need to acquire in order to meet that commitment. The City of Boston also uses census results to help in all of its applications for funding, and to assist in understanding what the needs are for different types of housing.



# THE POPULATION OF THE STREET

## THE POPULATION OF THE STREET

Winter 1993 - 94

Winter 1994- 95

Street Count	163	31	0	106	33	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>194</b>			<b>139</b>		

There were 106 men and 33 women on the streets of Boston on the night of the census (19 of whom were listed as "possibly homeless"). This is a 28% decrease from the 194 individuals found on the street the year before. There has been a significant decrease in the amount of homeless men and women found on the street in the City of Boston over the past couple of years. We can credit the decrease of the street population to the outreach efforts of homeless providers in Boston. Fortunately again, there were no children identified in the street count.

The street population is a mobile one. While all steps are taken to limit double counting, there may be some inherent error factor associated with counting this particular population. On the other hand, it would be impossible to count every individual living on the streets. Many may be found in abandoned buildings, parked cars, or other areas which would be unsafe for volunteers to search. Therefore, any potential implied or real error associated with the street count is understood to be invariably small.

Many homeless men and women who sleep on the streets are mentally ill and in need of services. Their condition has often deteriorated to the point where they are too paranoid to go into shelters and afraid of the people who offer them help in the street. Clearly, these people are in need of inpatient services.

Many of the homeless men and women on the street refuse shelter, but are attended to by outreach workers from the Pine Street Inn. The outreach van workers distribute blankets to people on the streets who will not go into shelters. A doctor from Health Care for the Homeless accompanies the outreach van once a week to check the health of the men and women on the street.

One of the important outcomes of the street count is that individuals who are found are offered transportation to shelter. Over 20 homeless individuals accepted a ride to shelter this year.

# HOMELESS ADULTS

## ADULT SHELTERS

	Winter 1993-94		Winter 1994-95	
Betty's Place		17		20
Health Care for Homeless	40	5	37	6
Kingston House	35		39	
New England Vets Shelter	141		157	
Pine Street Inn	298		350	
Anchor Inn	275		139	
Women's Inn		94		104
St. Paul's	45		47	
Night Center	58	7	66	12
Long Island Shelter	266	37	394	29
Woods-Mullen	141	52	137	47
LIS Annex	98		103	
Rosie's Place		20		20
Sancta Maria		4		
Shattuck Shelter	170	11	187	20
United Homes	68		66	
YMCA	50		61	
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>1685</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>1783</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1932</b>		<b>2041</b>	

There were 1,783 men and 258 women in adult shelters on the night of the census - for a total of 2,041, which is a 5.6% increase over the 1,932 counted in adult shelters last year. It was also a colder night this year, which helps to explain why fewer people were on the street and more were in shelters.

The Pine Street Inn's 718 guests make up 35% of those counted in adult shelters. The City of Boston's Long Island Shelter reported 710 guests, which is 34.7 % of the adult shelter population.

The City of Boston and shelter providers are making every effort to convert shelter beds to transitional beds. This effort is to help move people beyond shelter and into housing and jobs. Transitional housing comprises 12% of Pine Street Inn's beds, 28% of Long Island's beds, and 13% of Shattuck's shelter beds.

# HOMELESS FAMILIES

## FAMILY SHELTERS

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
Boston Family	8	10		7	10	
Bostonian Chambers	10	13				
Casa Nueva Vida	6	11		6	12	
Crittenton-Hastings	9	8		12	6	
Crossroads	3	11	25	3	11	23
Families-In-Trans.	21	43		20	36	
Family House	13	22		1	17	24
LifeHouse	9	14		9	13	
Margaret's House				20	23	
Project Hope	8	12		6	9	
Queens of Peace				4	1	
Salvation Army	4	7		3	7	
Sojourner House	3	9		2	7	16
St. Ambrose Inn	9	21		9	15	
St. Mary's Home	20	10		10	5	
Temporary Home	16	24		13	21	
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>221</b>

## OTHER

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
DPW Hotel/Motel	17	186	364	16	300	592
Scattered Site	18	208	425	16	170	382
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>789</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>974</b>

## TOTAL HOMELESS FAMILIES IN BOSTON

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Male	Female	Children	Male	Female	Children
	<b>38</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>1018</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>1195</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1597</b>			<b>1857</b>		

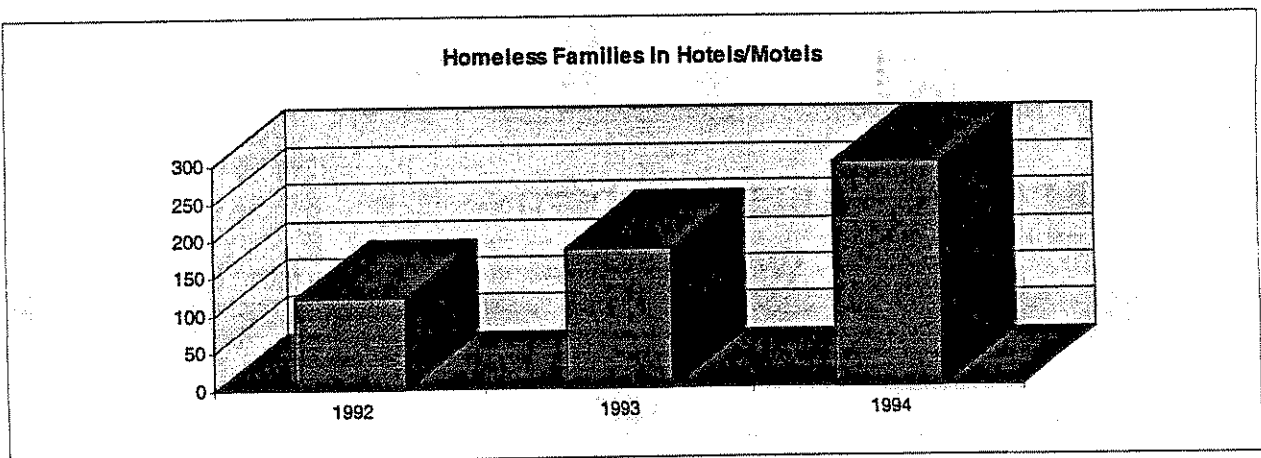
# HOMELESS FAMILIES

Last year, there were 38 men, 541 women, and 1,018 children staying in family shelters, scattered sites, and hotels/motels compared to 38 men, 624 women, and 1,195 children this year. This represents a 15.3% increase in the overall number of homeless families. However, there was a 61% increase in the number of families staying in hotels and motels this year compared to last.

There are actually fewer families becoming homeless per year in Massachusetts than there were five years ago. Five years ago it took less than two months for a family to secure affordable housing. The number of families in shelter has increased because the amount of time they have to stay in shelter before finding affordable housing has increased to between seven and ten months.

There are no new rental vouchers issued by the State. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program, managed by the State's Executive Office of Communities and Development does not roll over certificates. Once a family no longer needs a subsidy, that subsidy is not made available to another family in need.

The City encourages the State to create an affordable housing strategy for families who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. It is the lack of affordable housing that causes homelessness for families, not the emergency shelter system. The emergency shelter system provided by the Department of Public Welfare provides a safety net to homeless families in Massachusetts. Without that safety net, the State would be jeopardizing the lives of thousands of Massachusetts children.



# WOMEN IN CRISIS

## WOMEN IN CRISIS PROGRAMS

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94		Winter 1994-95	
Asian Shelter Advocacy Project			8	4
Casa Myrna House	27	41	34	42
Dove, Inc.	7	10	3	5
Elizabeth Stone House	23	27	19	21
FINEX	7	11	6	6
Harbor Me	2	3	2	3
Renewal House			5	7
Transition House	5	7	6	8
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>170</b>		<b>179</b>	

The number of women and children in Battered Women's Shelter increased by 5%. There were 83 women and 96 children in shelter on the night of the census, compared to 71 women and 99 children last year. Advocates report that requests for emergency shelter still exceeds the supply.

The State imposes a 90 day limit on the amount of time a woman can stay at a battered women's shelter. This results in women having to leave these programs before they have secured housing. Consequently, the majority of these women enter the emergency shelter programs for homeless families.

It would be less disruptive to battered women and their children if they could receive emergency shelter in one location, and not have to bounce between the systems until they secure housing.

Last fall, Mayor Menino gave higher priority to battered women for Section 8 and public housing, in an effort to decrease the amount of time these families have to stay in shelter.

# ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

## ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94		Winter 1994-95	
Bridge Extension	9	5	8	8
Bridge-Elliott Complex		7	9	9
Boston Adolescent	6	5		
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>41</b>		<b>34</b>	

There were 8 males, 17 females and 9 children in the adolescent shelter this year, compared to 15 males, 17 females and 9 children last year. Boston Adolescent Shelter closed this year, resulting in a 17% decrease in the capacity to shelter homeless adolescents.

# HOSPITALS

## HOSPITALS

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94		Winter 1994-95	
Boston City Hospital	7	2	2	4
Massachusetts General	1		1	1
New Eng. Medical Center	3	2	3	
University Hospital				
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>11</b>	

This count identifies the size of the homeless population seeking medical treatment in hospitals on the evening of the count.

# DETOX

## DETOX

Winter 1993-94

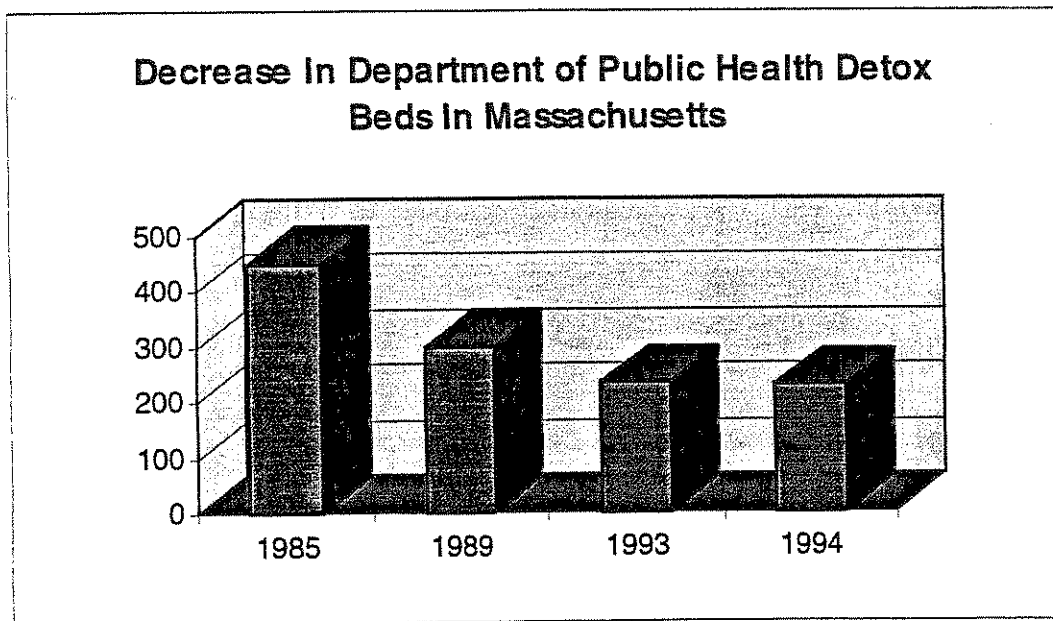
Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94		Winter 1994-95	
Boston Alcohol	24	8	25	10
River Street	10	8	16	3
Andrew House	17	6	23	3
Dimock Detox	7	2	12	8
STAIR	24	5	37	10
Tewksbury	121		81	
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>232</b>		<b>228</b>	

On the night of the census, there were 194 men and 34 women who are homeless in detox facilities - a total of 228.

Homeless providers have been advocating that the State increase the supply of detox and recovery beds to homeless individuals. Since the State closed the 450 beds at Bridgewater State Hospital without a replacement, the demand for substance abuse services in the homeless population far exceeds the supply.

The State needs to create a comprehensive approach to providing men, women and families in need of substance abuse treatment with the long-term comprehensive care they need.



# MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

## MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

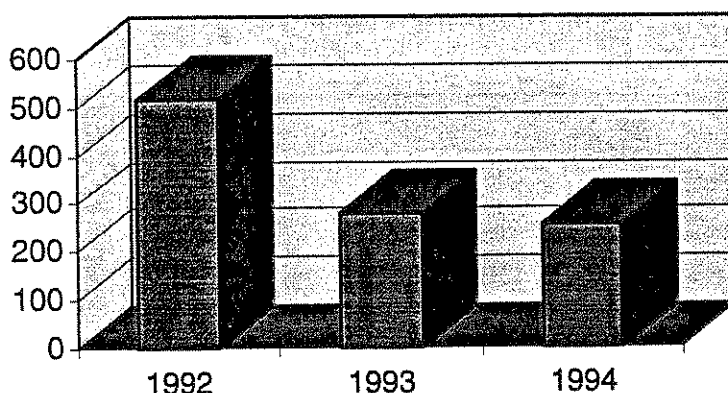
Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94	Winter 1994-95
Mass. Mental Health/1		
Fenwood Inn	35	25
Deaconess	7	6
Lindemann Center	9	9
Solomon Carter Fuller	18	22
Bay Cove M.H.	59	44
Bay View Inn	34	32
Parker Street Central	30	26
Parker Street West		14
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>254</b>

The number of homeless people accessing shelter through the mental health system continues to decrease. This year, there were 164 men and 90 women, a total of 254 homeless individuals, in Department of Mental Health shelters. This is a decrease of 9.6% over last year, and 50% decrease in the amount of homeless men and women in DMH shelter the year before.

**Decrease In Department of Mental Health Shelter Beds**





# MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

The State has recognized that they have 1200 homeless mentally ill clients living on the streets and shelters of Boston, and over 2,000 clients state-wide. Appropriately, the State has committed resources over the past few years to create housing units for the homeless mentally ill. The City commends the State for this commitment, and encourages the State to provide housing and services to the homeless mentally ill. The City also recommends that the State recognize the need to provide housing and service options to the homeless mentally ill throughout the Commonwealth, and not just in the City of Boston.

The State needs to provide a continuum-of-care for the homeless mentally ill. The first step in that continuum is access to DMH run shelter facilities. Homeless providers are not equipped to deliver the medical attention homeless mentally ill men and women need. DMH needs to provide access to their shelters in order to move homeless men and women along the continuum and into permanent housing.

# TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS

## TRANSITIONAL SHELTERS

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94		Winter 1994-95	
Boston Children Services	6	7	6	6
Brookview House	8	19	8	18
Casa Esperanza			23	
Crittenton-Hastings Transitional	27	36	15	24
T.R.A.C.			5	5
Elders Living At Home	9	4	12	11
Family House	1	5	8	
Harbor Lights	17	21	47	18
Horizons House		4	5	9
Mass. Halfway Houses	85	5	24	75
Nazareth House				17
New England Vets Transitional				3
One Wise Street	8		130	8
Revision House				8
Seton Manor			19	3
Women, Inc.		21	7	23
Portis House		7	13	8
<b>SUB-TOTALS:</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>347</b>		<b>556</b>	<b>112</b>

The amount of transitional shelter programs has increased by 60%. There were 556 men, women and children in transitional shelters this year, compared to 347 last year.

# TOTALS

## TOTALS

Winter 1993-94

Winter 1994-95

	Winter 1993-94			Winter 1994-95		
Street Count	163	31		106	33	
Adult Shelters	1685	247		1783	258	
Family Shelters	3	147	229	6	154	221
Other	35	394	789	32	470	974
Women In Crisis		71	99		83	96
Adolescent	15	17	9	8	17	9
Hospitals	11	4		6	5	
Detox	203	29		194	34	
Mental Health	192	89		164	90	
Transitional Shelters	120	108	119	314	130	112
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2427</b>	<b>1137</b>	<b>1245</b>	<b>2613</b>	<b>1274</b>	<b>1412</b>
<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>4809</b>			<b>5299</b>		

The overall homeless population has increased by 10.2% this year. There were 2,613 men, 1,274 women, and 1,412 children in shelter this year, compared to 2,427 men, 1,137 women, and 1,245 children in shelter last year. Children represented the largest increase, 13.4%, in the homeless population. Women increased 12% over last year, and men increased by 7.7% over last year.

The homeless single population represents 56.9% of the census count. Homeless families continue to grow at a higher rate than homeless single adults, but represent less of the census population - 43.1%.

Through Boston's efforts to preserve and increase the amount of lodging houses, we have been able to help stabilize the homeless adult population. Mayor Menino is committed to moving homeless men and women beyond shelter and into job training, educational training, and permanent housing, and was recently awarded \$2.1 million in McKinney funds for program at Long Island.

Working with the State and Federal governments, the City will attempt to secure funds to ensure affordable housing options for homeless families.



# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**We would like to thank the following individuals for their help with this year's census:**

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